

THE STAR IN THE EAST.

A CLEAR CALL TO SOUTH AFRICA.

Contrary to expectation, a unique significance attaches to the coming Provincial Elections. The wonderful proletarian revolution begun in Russia, but destined to encircle the civilised world, has completely thrown in the shade the parochial topics which Capitalism has hitherto allowed a Provincial Council to play with. It is a trumpet call to the nations of the earth to which South Africa too, backward though her Labour Movement is, cannot long be deaf. Just as we seized the coincidence of the 1914 elections to protest against the deportations and Commissioner Street murders, so on a grander scale to-day we have the glorious opportunity by voting Socialist on June 20th of associating ourselves unmistakably with the magnificent lead of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Committees. Shall we let it slip?

The dramatic and triumphant rapidity of the revolution indeed takes our breath away. Socialists themselves never hoped for so early a fruition of their movement: they even feared that the war would set it back indefinitely. But in one respect they are vindicated to the letter. They have ever urged that as the modern capitalist system inevitably meant war, there was only one way to end war, and that was, not to scream pacifism but to end the capitalist system—to show the master class the door and establish “the dictatorship of the proletariat”; all or nothing. Now Russia of all countries, clear-sighted, audacious, unfaltering, with magnificent contempt for the bogies and fetishes that capitalism would have us dread or revere, has suited the action to the word. The seeming miracle is taking shape at her hands. The people have already begun to seize the land, factories and machinery of production. In a twinkling they have opened the grandest chapter in history, the chapter of the Co-operative Commonwealth. Our look-outs have suddenly sighted the New World. From our Pisgah we descry our First Army already crossing the frontier and occupying the territory of the Promised Land.

Not without a prolonged and colossal struggle, however, will capitalism capitulate. Not avowed capitalist parties only, but Liberals, Radicals, ‘Labour’ parties and backsliding patriotic ‘Socialists’ in all lands still seem bound to Kapital’s chariot, ready to fight,

aye, even to call in the Kaiser, against the Revolution. It is a moment of crucial anxiety, of grave responsibility on every working man. Will the working class continue so to fool and betray itself? Will it fall divided or united stand? Will Labour in Central and Western Europe, in America and the British Dominions, scab on Labour in Russia? Will the workers sell their birthright for a mess of Imperialist potage which only the master class after all will eat?

“Workers of the World” cry the Russian revolutionaries to all nations, “for very shame arise! Unite! Assert yourselves! Shake off the besotting fumes of your mad patriotic carouse. Be free men! Help us! Carry on forthwith throughout the earth what we have begun here! Already we are gripping the ruling class by the throat. The hour has arrived for us, all together, to fling away our chains! Thus alone shall we ‘stop the war,’ rid the world of all its Kaisers and secure the only victory worth having. For all your dearly bought war ‘gains’ and the enemy’s alike must inevitably, as by a stroke of the pen, become neutralised and of no avail once man’s Empire over man is swept away, and real liberty, transcending parties, frontiers, races and nationalities, is won at last.”

Workers under the Southern Cross, will you not respond to this one clear call from Eastern Europe, whence cometh our salvation? Do not be distracted by passing trifles from realising the historic occasion, and the part that is yours to play in it. And do not wait, like the French and German patriotic ‘Socialists,’ to be forced to come in. Be in it now, instead of being left behind, only to be swept in at the finish—for you need not expect to keep out of it for ever. Emulate as far as you can the Russian initiative. Be up to date. Bury the past and, as the least you can do, voice your support of the regime of the future—the only alternative in the long run to universal militarism and hooliganocracy. Think of the day when your children will ask, “Daddy, what did you do in the Great Revolution?”

S.P.B.

A great Russian revolutionary said a few years ago while in exile in Paris that the Russian Government was the dark shadow across the world, but that the Russian people would become the light of the world.